From:	SShteir@aol.com
To:	SaltonSeaComments; jnhardesty@adelphia.net; kris.ohlenkamp@sbcglobal.net; akotin@earthlink.net;
CC:	
Subject:	Salton Sea Draft EIR Comments from San Fernando Valley Audubon Society
Date:	Thursday, January 04, 2007 2:14:04 PM
Attachments:	

January 4, 2007

Dale Hoffman-Floerke
Department of Water Resources
Colorado River and Salton Sea Office
P.O. Box 942836, Sacramento, California

Dear Mr. Hoffman-Floerke,

Please accept the following comments on behalf of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society for the Salton Sea Restoration Plan Draft EIR.

My organization, the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, is an 1800 member environmental organization. Our mission is to preserve wildlife habitat and educate the public about the natural resources of the San Fernando Valley and larger region of Southern
California.

The Salton Sea is one of the most important, if not most important bird areas in the state of California. It is an essential migration, winter and breeding spot for over 400 species of birds. It is also critical habitat to many threatened and endangered species in California and the Pacific states. Aside from wildlife, the sea is an important recreational and economic area for the inland empire.

But the Salton Sea is at a crossroads. Increased salt concentrations, caused by naturally sandy soils, agricultural runoff and high rates of evaporation threatens the sea's aquatic ecosystem. In fact, by 2003 the increased concentrations of salt and decreasing water quality destroyed the marine sport fishery, leaving only tilapia in the sea's salty waters. Equally grave is the transfer of water from agricultural interests to urban areas along the coast, which will result in significantly less water flowing into the sea. Global warming will only accelerate the process of salination and evaporation.

According to the Pacific Institute, by 2021 the rising salinity will mean the loss of all fish life, while tens of thousands of birds will lose food sources and habitat. The same organization predicts that by 2036, the decrease in water volume will result in 130 square miles of dusty lake bed- a serious public health hazard in a region already plagued by high rates of asthma. If the Salton Sea is not restored, there will be grave consequences for the economy, wildlife and the health of citizens in the Inland Empire.
The draft EIR prepared by the California Resources Agency evaluates eight possible alternatives for restoration. The preferred alternative for the restoration effort, as stated in the draft EIR is to eliminate air quality impacts of restoration, restore aquatic and shoreline habitats for fish and wildlife and protect water quality.

However, my organization agrees with the Salton Sea Coalition, A diverse group of conservation, fishing and hunting groups, that none of the eight alternatives sufficiently addresses the needs of people and wildlife. Accordingly, we endorse the Salton Sea Coalition's call for a "mix and match" approach to the alternatives to ensure the best outcome for public health, recreational opportunities and habitat for fish and wildlife.

Some important tenets to be included in the final plan would be to maximize shoreline and shallow water habitat for birds and the endangered pupfish (Alternatives 2 and 4), protect clean water for fish and birds and minimize selenium of hydrogen sulfide contamination (Alternatives 1 and 2), provide sufficient water to alleviate the problem of dust (Alternatives 1, 2,3,5,6 and 8), and the create a 10,000 acre lake at the north end of the sea. Also important is the ability to provide environmental benefits before completion and that it is designed to accommodate unanticipated

environmental changes.
Specifically, the ideal restoration plan for the Salton Sea would include the
following:

• Between 25,000 – 50,000 acres of Shallow Saline Habitat Complex, as described in Alternatives 1 and 2, to provide habitat for shoreline species;

• Create concentric rings using geotubes or other dirt-filled barriers, as described in Alternative 4, to provide additional shallow habitat, deeper marine habitat, shoreline and view protection, air-quality protections, and recreation;

• Similar to the lakes found in Alternatives 5-7, provide a large (approximately 10,000 acre) North Lake, which would be the largest recreational lake in Southern California, fed by the Whitewater River to provide recreation and development opportunities
without the costs and risks associated with a major mid-Sea barrier or the costs of pumping water from the southern end of the Sea;

• Provide at least one-half acre-foot of water per acre of exposed Seabed, as stipulated by the Salton Sea Advisory Committee,
to prevent dust pollution caused by exposed playa, as described in Alternatives 1-3, 5-6 and 8;

• Construct shallow saline habitat (known as "early start habitat") immediately to provide resources for birds during the long permitting and construction process, as described in all of the proposed alternatives; and

• Develop a plan that provides water for habitat and air quality mitigation first, in case of possible shortages or system malfunctions, as described in Alternatives 1-3.

We urge you to implement these points in any final Salton Sea Restoration Plan for the successful restoration of the Salton Sea. A sound Salton Sea Restoration Plan will enhance the economy, wildlife and public health of Southern California

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Seth Shteir
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